







FAMILY  
HISTORY  
ALTENBURG

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**INDIANA**  
**BY COVERED WAGON**

**Clara Altenburg Zimmerman**





This story of pioneer life in Indiana is based on the experiences of Daniel Altenburg and his wife, Sarah Latson, who came to De Kalb County from Ohio by covered wagon in 1837. It was written by Daniel Altenburg's granddaughter, Clara Altenburg Zimmerman, from the recollections of her grandfather and grandmother and other members of their family.

Daniel Altenburg was born July 19, 1809, in Montgomery County, New York. His pioneer farm was three miles east of Auburn, north of the present state road #8. He died in Auburn, January 19, 1888.

October 8, 1956.





In the yard were trees, lilac bushes, many plants that were called "Pineys" before they were known as "Peonies", bleeding hearts, fever fwe, pinks and all the most loved of the common plants, crowded into the rich ground along the walk leading from the gate to the front door.

Mrs. Alden was a happy contented woman as she sang, and rocked her baby, But the hour of counting her blessings was soon interrupted when the door was opened and her husband came hurriedly, and of course a bit noisily, into the room. "Why Daniel, what has happened - are the children all right - you look so anxious - what is the matter?"

"Well, there's matter enough, Sarah. I just came from talking with Mr. Bevens at the bank. He tells me the panic we have been hearing so much about is right here. All over the whole country there is the worst panic we ever had. Banks are closing, no one is willing to loan money, no one has money to loan, no pay for work, no work to do. I do not know which way to turn. All we hear is panic, panic, panic!"

"Well, Daniel, the first thing you can do now is to put this child in the crib while I go call the girls to help finish the work. We will have dinner and talk over our plans. Some way will be found to be out of all our troubles - there will be a 'way to turn!'"

Sarah was ready to take charge of any situation that needed action -





BY COVERED WAGON TO INDIANA

The sunshine pouring through the grapevine by the window made a beautiful picture of shadows on the floor of Mrs. Alden's kitchen. That was early one morning in June 1837. The room was also used as living room of the small house in a little village in central Ohio. The floor had been painted a soft brown, just the color of the hazel nuts that grew on the two large trees in the yard. Mrs. Alden had just finished the pleasant task of bathing, dressing and feeding her baby. She held him nestled in her arms as she crooned the usual lullaby - most mothers love to do - while he slept, when a few minutes dare be taken for the joy of holding the baby.

She was thinking of her new home - a very common, rather small house, plainly furnished with the most necessary articles for a growing family, and kept immaculately clean. The house with its fresh coat of white paint, the green shutters, was, of course, like most of the small houses of that time. They were "L" shape, a story and a half, the usual pattern young farmers wanted for their growing families. The front door, opening from the porch, made shelter where visitors could linger, remembering many things they had nearly forgotten to tell before saying "good-by", "do come over", and "do come back again soon."





she was ready for any work her hands could do. Her rule was do the first thing your eyes fall on, then call for everyone to "get busy." Her household had the help of a younger brother, Stephen, and an orphan girl to help with the work. With a family of eight to care for it was not hard to know "where to begin." Her mind had to be nimble as well as her feet - or was it the other way around - quick mind, nimble feet. Any way there was much work to be done.

Sarah tried to be cheerful as she planned the work to be done, trying to cover her many worries, planning anew the most natural thing in the world, making a home for growing children - the food, clothing and shelter - in face of a panic - about which, until today, they knew only rumors.

Daniel was filled with anxiety he had never before known, after hearing the other men at the store add their fears to the general opinions of the village officials.

He always turned to Sarah for help - for her way of looking on the bright side, laughing away worries that appeared large to him. Now she knew there was no time for laughter, with such a condition abroad in the land - at their very door ordering them to give up their home, and that very soon. They decided they should see Cousin William for advice and counsel.





The next day Daniel came home in great excitement, full of enthusiasm for a new plan. "Well, Sarah, William is about ready to go out to Indiana where they will take up land, build a log cabin, clear a few acres for planting corn and potatoes, then come back for his family. He wants me to go with him and take up a quarter section of land near him - then help him and he will help me put up a cabin - and we will all go back with them in the fall - be all settled by winter in a cabin on our own land! What do you think of that - a farm of our own in Indiana!"

Sarah thought it might be all right - "but it might be years before we have a home there - and at that a log cabin to live in! Think of the hard work of clearing the land - could you stand that? But of course we will go if you are of the same opinion when you come back for us."

"Of course I can stand the work! Look at my strong arms - good for any kind of work! What anyone else can do, I can do and I will!" His assurance and confidence thrilled the whole family and half the lifetime of hard work was nearly half done right there.

Trying to keep level headed, Sarah said, "Our boys will soon be of help to you - they do need to keep well and be strong and to learn to work - someday the farm will be their own."

"Cousin William says there are many bears, wolves, deer and catamounts in that part of the country. There will be many kinds of work to do - then there will be fishing and hunting and plenty of building going on - but -



are you willing to go, Sarah?"

With such enthusiasm growing among the whole family who could hold back from such an adventure. Only one thing to do - follow the advice of Cousin William and go west the very next week to begin life as a pioneer in the sparsely settled part of North Eastern Indiana.

For the next few months Sarah found much to do to be ready for the long trip in ox drawn wagons over new trails, through deep woods, over almost impassable swamps and muddy roads.

When Daniel returned in September for his family he was more than ever filled with enthusiasm about the land he found for his home. In a few weeks everything was ready for loading into the covered wagons. Old friends came to help. The house had been sold - all financial affairs settled, all obligations met, and they were ready to begin anew - becoming first settlers in a wonderful new part of the country. Old neighbors brought gifts for Sarah - plants and roots of favorite roses. From Mrs. Bevens came roots of her thousand leaf rose bush - for the new home - where they hoped would be found "thousands of good friends" in the land that seemed so far away. All her friends came with some little shrub or root of favorite plants "to be remembered by" for they might never be able to meet again - visiting would not be possible when friends were so far away."





There was a general movement that year, 1830, into the neighboring state, for since the days of Jefferson people were being shifted toward the West, many were moving from Ohio into the Northern part of Indiana that only a few years before had been made a new State in the Union.

Traveling by ox drawn wagons filled with household goods as well as people, called for courage and endurance, as most of the way would be over trails through forests and swamps. The families would take turns in walking, driving the cows, or guiding the slowly plodding teams of oxen. In or about the wagons with covered domes that for a few months would be "home sweet home" for the people, were stored away tools, a plow, bags of feed, while of course behind the wagons would be the cows - contented ones - and watching over the whole crowd would be the faithful old dog Tige.

In some manner room was found for safely carrying dishes. A small mirror - a wedding gift from her mother to Sarah - has been in the home of one of her granddaughters to this day. The picture on the lower part of the mirror is a small farm house and yard with most of the implements usually in use on a farm nearby where the family gathered to count their blessings evidently. The glass mirror, perhaps never too bright and clear,





has become dull with age, and the many disappointments it has met with in its long life. Once it knew only young faces - now age has brought wrinkles and white hair (if any at all) - to those who love and care for the things that came in the covered wagon over a hundred years ago.

The sunshine cheered them with its brightest rays on that morning in October 1836 when they began their journey to the West in the "lumbering chariot of progress" that Daniel called their covered wagon.

They decided to go by the new road to the river, crossing at Defiance where they would camp for a few days, for it had long been the ambition of Daniel to visit the settlement and the Fort at Defiance, in the Maumee Valley.

They were filled with enthusiasm for the novelty of life on the road, camping out was a pleasure for everyone. The beauty of October weather, the blue of the sky, the floating fleecy clouds by day, the starry heavens at night made them remember the handiwork of the Lord - to realize the world is a beautiful world. They were full of joy for being alive and ready for every new day. They hoped the journey would last for many weeks - then as the sameness began to grow too ordinary, they were aware of many timesome days before they reached the end of the journey.

They passed fields of corn in shocks like Indian teepees - waiting for



the day when people for miles around would gather for husking bees. Then the corn would be husked, stored in bins. For that great day there would be plenty of food and plenty of fun - for when a red ear of corn was found the prettiest girl or woman would have to be kissed. No one had to be driven to that ordeal, while the fight put up - or put on - by the blushing lady to keep the wrong man at a distance was quite an engagement and all red ears were not found on corn stalks.

The fear of meeting Indians grew less as they drew near the settlement at Defiance. The Maumee Valley was said to be the heart of the Indian Nation at one time, the center where the tribes came to live, to trade and to hold great council meetings. Daniel had read history, and stories of Indian wars, listened to men tell of the wars they had been in with Indians, his own experiences while in Pennsylvania and New York and Ohio all gave him much of interest to tell his family as they rested by the camp fires near the river crossing where they rested for a few days on their way "to the West."

So much of interest had occurred on this Historic ground, it was full of romance and charm as he told ~~the~~ story to his listeners.

At Defiance the river Auglaize swept in to join the Maumee on the way to the Great Lakes on the North. Winding through rich farming land, giving to the soil for miles around a richness that has produced fine crops in grain, fruit and vegetables, and also health and happiness to generations of inhabitants of the Maumee Valley.





Ancient tribes of Indians had gathered from great distances, often whole seasons were required for the journey to the Asplaize - that name in the Indian language meant "falling timbers."

Men of the forest found this to be a strategic center of the Northwest Territory. It is said they seemed led by intuition in selecting this part of the country for their own great gatherings before the white man came to drive them to lands beyond the Mississippi River.

General Wayne had built a road from the East to the first Settlement in the County and had built the Fort in Defiance in August 1794. It had required eight days for that work and when finished he declared that "he defied all the English - the Indians - and devils in hell" to take that Fort! General Scott then declared "it should then be called Fort Defiance." In 1812 the Fort Defiance became an important point in concentration of troops under General Harrison.

The surrounding land near the Fort was highly cultivated. Immense orchards of apples and peaches were bearing fruit in season. It was a great trading point for the French Canadians as well as Indians. The Maumee Valley, extending a hundred miles East and West and the same distance North and South from Defiance, was ceded by the Indians to the U. S. in 1767, the town of Defiance was laid out in 1822. It had been a growing town for about 15 years when the Aldens stopped on their way to Indiana.

The "spirit of progress" was not suggesting to them to stay in a well settled County - but led them on to come out of a dense forest with years of hard labor to build their own homes.





After a visit to the Fort and the stores there were to be seen things more interesting than all out of doors to the children on that beautiful October day. They were given sugar cakes, cookies and a few toys. While Daniel had very few pennies to spend for unnecessary things, who could refuse to buy a few pieces of candy for the children? Surely not Daniel Alden.

At the Mill they saw great logs being turned into lumber and placed in neat piles to be used in the building of homes and stores going on all over the county. The sweet odor of fresh sawdust at the Mill reminded the men of their own cabins waiting in the woods to be finished before winter set in, so now they should be on their way toward the West.



The big Black Swamp was just ahead of them which they would avoid by taking the trail leading north from Defiance.

The swamp area was covered with forests of oak, elm, and other trees of gigantic size. Years of hard labor were required to convert that swamp land into good farming land, that now, at this date, has become more like prairie land in the well developed Valley.

But wagon wheels must be kept rolling along from the Ohio land. Winds were growing colder, roads rougher, streams were to be crossed where danger of sinking in the mud gave some concern to the drivers of those wagons. They were finding some roads of corduroy - but "not the velvet kind" the women said. The wagons kept rumbling slowly along toward the State line. Before nightfall they looked for a camping place. While preparing supper they observed smoke from a fire that meant there was surely food cooking and other campers were not far away. The men and boys investigating found a camp where Indians were having a meal. They were friendly and offered food to the visitors. Over the fire were large kettles of food. Several women with very dark faces, long black hair, robes of dark blankets, were dipping up food - soup or rice or hominy - like thick gray gravy, was dipped into bowls of red or green pottery. The men of the forest cranked from the bowls offering some to the white visitors that was kindly refused. The red men





gave grunting sounds to their children warning them to keep quiet and pay no attention to their visitors. Great formality was observed by some representatives of two great Nations as they happened to meet along the way - white men moving in, red men moving out of what had been their own land in the central part of the United States.

The Aldens felt no fear of their new neighbors that night as their camp was well guarded by the watchdog Tige, who would not sleep while wolves howled or owls wailed, or any sounds new to him were heard - his snarls and growls would warn any prowling thing on the ground or in the air to keep away. He was not afraid but would defend his family, though every hair along his back would rise in anger at his command.

As the distance increased from their dear little home in Ohio they grew serious about their venture into a strange place for making their home. The romance was fast disappearing - the wagons were jolting and tiresome - the rumbling had lost the charm of the first few days of the journey.

The women began to question the idea - "Sarah, do you think we made a mistake to leave home and come to such a wild, lonely place to live. Nothing but trees, trees, trees! How will we ever live in the woods. All the people we met are so old looking - they must be forty or fifty years old - and not a tooth, and so wrinkled and dark. Will we grow to look like that?"

"Now Abigail, no one has seemed to be sorry they live here, everyone is friendly and they seem happy. Perhaps they have no time to feel sorry, they have so much to do. They have been kind to us though we are all strangers.



we will have hard work and few comforts, but we will keep well and be glad we came to Indiana."

After moving the children to give more comfort to the "front seat" occupants, Sarah continued, "We are not moving along very fast are we in our old chariot, as Daniel calls this covered wagon; but we will surely be at the end of our journey in a few days. We will be sure to like our new abode, always we will be able to see the sky, the wonderful clouds at sunset and at sunrise too, for early in the morning there will be milking to do and the sky all blue and pink and white will be like a tufted quilt as the sun comes up for another day. And on rainy days there will be music in our ears as the raindrops fall on the roof."

"Oh yes, if raindrops fall on our heads, or we run for pans to catch the music as it patters on our heads! You always hear music Sarah, in everything."

"Well I cannot help it, there is so much music in everything. I hope I will hear it in the woods always."

"Oh Sarah, I do not think even a flash of lightning can get into the woods, but there, the moonlight last night was beautiful as I walked with Stephen by the wagon. Did you hear that terrible bird? Stephen said it was an owl (which was not a familiar bird to Ohio people).





After crossing the St. Joseph River they came in a few days to a small house, the first log house in Indiana. The people were friendly, insisting on their staying over night at the cabin. Good advice was given about finding the way to the next neighbor's cabin. The trail was found to be worse and worse. Following the narrow trails from the Ohio line they passed a small settlement now known as Hamilton. A few days later they reached Steubenville, Ind. where they lingered for a few days before turning South.

Following trails made by Indians was little better than cutting the way through brush and trees by ax in hand. They were later to learn more of those trails that Indians had found sufficient for their needs. Having no trade to carry on, there was no need for wagons. Roads later became necessary as vehicles were being used. *by the frontiers*

Between Pottowotome villages and trading posts were well beaten trails. Two of the main trails between Fort Wayne, Ind. and White Pigeon, Mich. crossed the land in DeKalb County where leading southeast was a trail intersecting one from Toledo near the St. Joe river that led to one near LaGrange, Ind. The first roads, of course, followed the Indian trails as far as practical. Soon after leaving Steubenville, the men going ahead to chop the way for the bears to follow, they became really lost. It was a most discouraging hour, nearly dark, snow beginning to fall, wind blowing colder, wolves were



howling, women and children frightened half to death at the idea of spending the night in the woods. To make matters worse, the oxen refused to move another step. They stood as though matters had gone far enough. A sort of mutiny possessed those dumb beasts. Daniel, in exasperation, thought that nothing in the world could compare with the headstrong determination of those oxen. Kindness had no effect, beating did not help. Tempers of drivers grew more and more ruffled. The women requested: "no swearing, remember the children" - but there did seem need for strong words; at least the name of those dumb beasts should be spelled with an A. The confusion and noise was more than the baby could stand so his crying was added with all his might. Believing they were not far from the home of the Smith family, they all joined in shouting which soon brought help, as Mrs. Smith recognized a baby's crying. To see men coming with lanterns to their rescue was a most welcome sight to the weary travelers.

One wagon was left where it was, fast in the mud; the other driven to the shelter offered by their new friend, shelter for man and beast. Warm food and dry clothing were provided for the night. Small cabins were large with kindness and real hospitality shown for strangers, and many fine friendships were formed, never to be forgotten.

In the morning they were ready for another day only possible because of the kindness of all those good people among the early settlers. Courage was restored and the future looked brighter to the Alderns as they started on their way to their own home in the woods, many miles away.





After several hours and a gain of only a few miles they saw beyond a creek a group of three or four cabins, a settlement that later became the town of Waterloo. The creek to be forded gave them another kind of trouble. The bank of the creek was steep, the water rather deep, the wagons unsteady with their loads of household goods and several of the people did not relish the idea of possibly being upset ~~in~~<sup>by</sup> the water.

The wagons were fastened together, one team leading, the other to the rear to push or to hold back as they made their way down one bank, across the bed of the creek, and up the other bank where they rearranged their loads, and with the cows following in more or less contentment they proceeded on their way. It required all that day to travel the five miles to the five little cabins and a saw mill that made up the beginning of a village - a town - a city the loveliest of the plain - sweet Auburn, on the banks of Cedar Creek.

In the village they found the same spirit of friendliness they had found everywhere. The women and children were left at the one house called an Inn while the men and older boys went on to the farm to finish the cabin and to unload the wagons. After a few days the fireplace was pouring out a cheerful welcome to the rest of the family. The room was overflowing with happy cheerful people in what was to be their home for a few years, come what may of good or evil, health or ague, disappointment or prosperity. They were not afraid. The first work to be done was to provide fuel to burn. The trees must be felled, cut into right lengths and piled near



the door, corded into rows.

The green logs would sizzle and fry, but after some time would give off heat near the fire, while away from the fire one would almost freeze. It has been said that the reason the War of Independence was carried on for so many years was that men would rather get to the heating of drums and sleep in tents than to sit in ladder back chairs or on settees before a fireplace and nearly roast or freeze to death. But that was many years, many wars ago; we still have fireplaces and antique chairs and like them. Many women would give any amount of money or stand for hours at an auction to become the owner of a ladder back chair, settee, spool beds or an old stand that had been in the home of an old pioneer, or if from her own grandfather's log cabin it becomes a precious heirloom.





The winter of 1837 and 1838 was most severe. Traveling was almost impossible with snow two feet deep. With only few comforts in the cabins, the families managed somehow to survive. How happy they were to know that other families were moving into the county also; when they could see smoke pouring from other chimneys it meant that others were there to clear the land for more than forest timber; it meant they could reach toward an ideal, a home, it meant work, early and late, but it meant progress and eventually, success.

There was much sickness in the winters of those first years and it was not until 1850 that they began to be free of the common diseases. In the winter of 1842-43 many people lost their stock by starvation as the grain and hay gave out. One man, while hunting, found the partly devoured and frozen bodies of nine deer in the woods. Under one roost, he found eighteen wild turkeys and many smaller game frozen.

When the sugar camps were ready during the months of March or April, the maple trees provided an abundance of sap to be boiled down into syrup or great cakes of sugar to last thruout the year, often being the only sugar obtainable. The stacks of buckwheat cakes must be covered with sugar or simply floating in the maple syrup; buckwheats cakes were the daily food for many families during those pioneer days.

Surveying the land, clearing the fields, planting the corn, beans and potatoes was the work taken up in earnest by the older members of the fam-



ilies in the springtime. The value of help from the moon was not ignored, for agriculture, moon and stars were related; better results were believed to result when things growing underground were planted in the dark of the moon; the lighter plants, to run over the ground in the sunshine, the rain or the moonlight would be better planted in the light of the moon. Next to the Bible, the most faithfully studied book was the Almanac - the old reliable family guide.

There were days of sickness when chills and fever, aches and pains, had the whole family in the house. Depending on home remedies, the help of good neighbors when necessary, the women had all and more than they could do when the ague came to abide with them. Sometimes it was called the "dumb ague". Swamps gave out many germs to anyone disturbing their long slumbers; "malaria to the new settlers" seemed to be their cry!

As the summer advanced into another year, the cabin of the Aldens took on a more cared for appearance, with lilac bushes and woodbine by the door. Along the pathway to the gate, blue flags from the swamp gave a welcome to all who came to the cabin and flowers grew as though they were glad to be in the yard. The deep dark woods around the cabin made it look small and lonely, but always the smoke rolling from the chimney gave it a look of home, calling the children to stay nearby, not to wander far away, for wolves were too near. For more than one reason was it necessary to save candlelight by being "early to bed"; there was a strong urge to get away



from the lonely darkness of the woods that at night seemed filled with some great power of danger complaining of the coming of people to disturb the life in the forest.

Neighbors often came to compare the worries of the times. Their respect for old customs called for organization of a church. A class was formed with all the Methodists in the township, and on October 31, 1839, the Methodist Church was organized in the village of Auburn, with three charter members, Wesley Park, his wife Sophia Park and Fannie Smith. Daniel Altenburg was made a class leader later.





In the merry month of May, there was a wedding in the home of Daniel and Sarah. The cabin must be made as attractive as possible for such an occasion. Branches of all the flowering trees must be carried home by the children; the lovely white dogwood added beauty and charm to the little cabin where the young people were married - to become among the first young pioneers to make their home in DeKalb County. They were to make their home with the Aldens. The woods and fields in May and June supplied the settlers with fruit; strawberries were abundant and later came the cranberries in the marshlands in the North and west part of the county. Wild game provided the meat for the settlers.

With two friendly Indians for guides, many hunting and fishing trips were made to the lakes near the state line on the north. Obbenoble and Mingo had been living in the nearby forest since the death of their mother. They were liked and trusted by the settlers for they were good Indians.

The farmers found it most annoying to have so much of their livestock carried away by the wolves and bears. On the farm of John Essig a trap was built that one morning held only the paw of a bear. A few men set out at once on a bear hunt but it was not for several months that a bear was found with only three feet, evidently the same one that had visited the Essig trap and had left his calling card!



One day the children went for a walk, following the path made by the cows that were turned into the woods every morning to graze and rest by the pond near the clearing. The children had been cautioned to look out for wild animals, especially the bears and never to go far from the cabin, but they were not frightened as they gathered wild flowers that grew so abundantly by the great beech and maple trees that never before had known little white children to be gathering flowers beneath their branches. The early spring beauties, the delicate blossoms veined with pink, were a favorite of all the wildflowers everywhere. In moist places near the pond there were blue white and yellow violets, Indian turnip or Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Dutchmen's Breeches that made the children shout with laughter as they gathered great handfuls of the wildflowers.

Noticing that the sun was going down, the older girls said, "We must go now, - we have all the flowers we can carry". In terror, one began to call, "Oh look - look! It must be a bear - it hobbles so funny!" They all began to run toward the path. Danny carried the smallest child, Sylvia, calling to the rest to "hurry out of there". They all ran as fast as they could over the rough ground, a bear moving along slowly not so far behind them. They remembered to call to the cows browsing along the way and the sound of the bells soon told that they were following on the way home with the children.

When they knew they were near the clearing, their voices were joined in





their screaming for they wanted to be heard. At the wood lot, cutting and piling up the wood, Stephen and Abigail heard the commotion and ran to meet the frightened boys and girls who made them understand there was need for help - for one child was missing. Little Sadie, a new neighbor's child, was not with the rest - she must be lost in the woods! Run for father and the rest of the men! Ring the dinner bell that would bring everyone within hearing to help!.....they would know that a dreadful thing had happened at the Alden's! Soon a number of men and boys armed with some kind of an instrument to use if necessary, were on the way to the pond in search of the little girl. They found bear tracks leading into the woods. All night they searched, going in all directions from the pond, but they were not able to find little Sadie. In the morning they were joined by the two Indians, Obbenobbe and Mingo. All day they searched; they found a piece of a yellow calico dress so they continued toward the creek. The next day, Obbenobbe found her, lying near the water, exhausted and frightened nearly to death, very thirsty and hungry. They took her on Mingo's horse to her mother who had been nearly frantic with worry and grief. Soon all the good women were helping her to care for the child and she recovered and lived to be an old lady - who told her grandchildren of her terrible experiences in the woods when she was a little girl.



The winter sunshine streaming into the room looked again upon Sarah as she was bathing dressing and feeding her baby, another one, before the fireplace in the cabin. Into the room the boys came rushing, to tell her some Indians were coming "four or five - some with paroooses on their backs~~s~~ squaws they were". One of the boys ran to call father, for noone could tell how friendly the strangers would be, and they should be met with equal numbers at least. In as cordial manner as she could manage Sarah invited them to come in, which they meant to do anyway, and to be seated, showing them a bench and a chair. They watched her dress her baby and were pleased when Sarah put ~~new~~ a white baby dress on the Indian baby. The mother was pleased and held the baby in the new dress in her arms as she went away, as proud as could be. The Indian men let it be known they wanted corn, so they were told to go into the loft to shovel down all they wanted which was all they could find. They gathered their blankets up and left with all the supply of shelled corn.

After a few days, the Aldens were the visitors and found the Indians engaged in making maple sugar. Offered a taste of the syrup, the visitors politely refused but made the Indians know they were pleased to be thought of. Reaching home, they told the rest of the family why they could not taste the fresh syrup; a little black dog was so busy cleaning the fresh syrup off his body, it was plain to be seen he had been swimming in the extra



supply. He had a sweet tooth and toenail which was more than they had!

After a few days, one rainy day, there came a group of Indians to the cabin. The guns they carried were left leaning against the house, under the eaves, it so happened. The boys tried to tell them the rain would fall into the guns as it did into the rain barrell at the corner, but the Indians only shook their heads, they did not understand, and walked on into the house asking for food. They were given all they wanted, then went to find their guns grunting and acting queerly as they looked at the boys. Trying to be good friends, the boys did all the tricks they knew to entertain the Indians; they turned cartwheels, stood on their heads, performed wrestling acts, played leap frog and did some singing, but the Indians only gave them queer sounds as they went away. Those boys did not lose their scalps as they feared might happen, but forty years later they were all quite bald, due no doubt to the scare they received on that day when the Indians called on them.

The Aldens' cabin was not far from the crossroad east of their home where a school house was built. It was a small one room cabin with one window and one door and of course a fireplace and it was considered quite enough to start students on their way to higher education and fame and fortune. The desks were of split logs against the wall on two sides and across one end of the room. The seats also were of split logs resting on poles for legs and furnished flat but splintery support for students who were seated facing the walls and thus giving the schoolmaster better control





over his young enemies.

The better to whack  
The bent over back  
Of a youngster learning subtraction

From his seat at the table  
The master was able  
To see all that caused any distraction.

They learned from those hard benches the art of enduring the hardships and privations of life; they also learned the love of books and papers, for they became lost in another world where life could be like a dream, a pleasant dream.

Not everyone enjoyed the long days in school. Stephen said they were always at loggerheads with the teacher, and to learn to read from the flat side of a log was very hard! But they did learn to love freedom and the life out of doors. The schoolmaster was annoyed at the noise of the whispering smaller children as they tried to learn "Up, up, Lucy, the day has begun". Little Henry would say, "Double up Lucy, the day has begun". The teacher gave him a slap on the back with a book which brought forth a loud "ouch", then the students were so amused there was much laughter, so everyone had to be given a slap with the book - a very welcome interruption by some of the hard working students. Before order

Before order was restored, the door was thrown open and a man burst into the room crying, "Alden's killed, Alden's killed". For a moment no one



stirred, then all the pupils rushed to the door, crying as they ran to the cabin where everything was so terrible, made worse by the cries of the family, as they saw their father being carried into the cabin, very badly hurt.

For several days, Daniel and Stephen with other helpers had been clearing the land for farming; many trees had been chopped down, all had gone well. This day had started out as the others. Daniel had heard the singing of the axe as it chopped its savage way into the heart of the tree, then with a wailing sound, the tree slowly gave up its hold and began to fall, branches swishing and scraping through the trees, then, as it struck other trees was thrown aside. The men called out, "Look out! Dan! - look out there!" - too late - Daniel was thrown to the ground with the falling tree. It was some time before he could be freed and taken home. Then someone must be sent to Auburn for a doctor. Then someone must ride to Ft. Wayne for a surgeon. Hours later, - next day, a young doctor came on horseback in place of the older surgeon who had been called to another part of the county for a similar accident - it happened that two other men had been hurt in the same way on the same day. The young surgeon did all he could do for the patient; neither chloroform nor ether was known or in use at that time, 1848. Whiskey was usually used to deaden pain, and now it was ordered by the doctor; the amputation of the arm was accomplished with the aid of several good neighbors and the kindly young doctor.





It was months before Daniel was able to leave his bed. The foot and ankle had been twisted or broken. The lost arm gave him much distress and pain, so a second or third burial was made to try to give him more comfort. Daniel was never free from pain the rest of his life, and he knew that he was face to face with some unconquerable thing, needing help from Divine Power. He learned to depend on his Bible and the beautiful lines from some wonderful hymns gave him help in enduring his pain.



Daniel Alden had found the life of a pioneer to be an interesting adventure. He did not regret the choice that had led to hard work with little time for anything but the most essential work. He was satisfied with his lot in life up to the time of his unfortunate accident. Now he must learn to live, to contribute some share in the work for his family - not become a defeated man. His spiritual life must be cleared as the forest was cleared of natural growths; he must live and work. His agreeable personality brought him many friends and he became an outstanding young man in the community. He was generous to a fault, ever ready to help those in need. His good sense of humor would stand in his mind and be a help to him, as the burden laid on his shoulders seemed to be too great. His fine spirit as a pioneer was not crushed.

Tall of stature, his blue eyes and always his happy smile gave one confidence in his fine character. He had many good friends among his neighbors. His children adored their father and loved to be near him in his work. When their walks took them through the woods or the fields he would tell them of the flowers and birds common to the forests and streams near their home. His love for all things "lovely or of good report" was shared by his family. Now he must learn to live and to work and to suffer.



The progress of the times called for better roads and towns, homes and improved farms. In the work of clearing the land, neighbors came to help in the "burnings"! Great majestic oak, walnut trees, hickory and elm trees and graceful willows - all the trees of the forest and swamp, had to fall before the army of determined men who were hearing the call of progress. In the minds of the people were better homes, books and newspapers, as they outgrew early conditions.

Then the years of hard work and careful management brought some degree of prosperity to Daniel and Sarah, a new house was built. Facing the north, the first room had to be on some occasions the dining room. On the right, the little parlor with windows on the north and west, became the room of joy, of sorrow, days of pleasure or sadness. From the east side of the kitchen, a stairway led to a room above where the six brothers slept. The three girls had to be satisfied with the parlor for their sleeping room. The porch, with seats on both sides seemed to invite friends to "come in" .... "be seated" .... "stay awhile". The door of the kitchen opened on the yard where on sunny days the lines of snowy white washing warned everyone not to go near those clean clothes! The corner room, off the kitchen with the south and west windows gave Sarah a view of the sheds where the sheep, the cow, the chickens could be heard at night should someone be prowling around or some hungry animal come to disturb them.





To Sarah and her daughters, the years had brought better times; it was possible to have about them the things so dear to a woman, the things that give comfort and pleasure in the home. A natural pride was satisfied in the rag carpet for the parlor, the first in that neighborhood. Although getting the material ready was really work, the rolls of bright colored carpeting were a joy and the home was cheerful and happy. Perhaps nothing gave so much comfort to everyone as the new oil lamps! To clean and fill the lamps every morning was a favorite bit of work!.... those lovely lamps on the shelf! .... no more candles!....not for that family! They never dreamed that a day would come when oil lamps would be replaced by candles, and that dinner for company would be served on bare tables and with napkins of paper!

In the evenings, the oil lamps were a blessing indeed, for books and newspapers were in daily use. Around the table, the young readers of deep dark subjects needed much light to bring out the beauties said to be found in Algebra and mathematics. Then by the melodian they would gather to sing the songs so dearly loved by the mother, "How Firm A Foundation", "Am I A Soldier of the Cross"...how their voices would ring out in "December as Pleasant as May". They could all sing heartily.



In 1861 came the call of the President for volunteers to join the army. Four sons joined the Army of the Potomac and through four long years served in helping free a race of people from slavery. Then came a day when they were needed at home. Years of toil and hardship had taken the courage and health of women and many lives were forfeited. The brave and energetic little mother, unable to endure longer the hardships and anxious days of war, was taken in death. She had done all she could do in life; she had been able to hear music in everything, as she hoped to do, but most of it had been in the harmony she found in her own family; she had been a cheerful, happy woman, yet ready for the adventure into a new world when the call came for her to go.

On the same day, her brother Stephen, after a long illness, was taken also. In the new Methodist church in Auburn was held the funeral of a brother and sister. Many people who could see more to love than to blame came to show their love and respect to two of their friends. In a small town is often found the very heart of kindness. Showing sympathy, helping to bear the burdens and sorrows of others when some of their numbers are taken, is the common way of life.

On a gently sloping hillside in the first cemetery, the sister and





brother were buried. Because of the stream at the foot of the hill, the great trees of oak, elm and beech giving beauty to the surroundings, the spot was thought to be a fitting resting place for one who so loved the beauty of nature. A few miles away toward the east was the farm where they had lived and made one of the first homes in the township. Near the spot where she was laid to rest a small common field stone marked the grave of an Indian woman who was given a christian burial by the good neighbors of Obbennobbe and Mingo. The three young sons of Stephen and Abigail all died within the next few years - years of grief and sorrow for the Aldens. Daniel never seemed the same again - learning to live with new people - finding new ways of doing his work - not rushing into work as he would rather do -; he had to fit the work to his ability. Old friends ~~had~~ found it distressing to witness his suffering. New friends were hard to meet. He had toiled to make the land contribute to his well-being; now his fight was to train his spirit to accept disappointments as a good christian should do. He lived many years never losing his faith and trust in God, never free from suffering.

When the word came that war was ended, no one was more thankful than Daniel for the safe return of the soldiers. His four sons and one son-in-law had served the four years of the Civil War. The citizens celebrated the return of the men of the county with a great meeting. There were speeches and of course a bon fire and songs, "When Johnny comes marching home again, hurrah", "The flag that made us free", "Glory. glory Hallelujah". There were about eight hundred people in the town by the close of the war.



Led by the same spirit of progress their father had known thirty years before, the older sons joined in the general movement into the neighboring state, and in the Michigan forests on the north, found their work in life clearing the land, making room for farms, towns and industrial plants. They were true pioneers, carving a living out of virgin forests, building homes, becoming true citizens.

With the country turning from forest into productive fields, the farmers were thinking of better living in the towns, and were leaving the farming to younger men. Back in DeKalb county, the land Daniel and his sons had made ready, was sold, and Daniel moved into Auburn. A new house was built on North Main Street and as though to help replace the trees he had helped destroy, he now encouraged the planting of many new shade trees. One large maple still is standing near the site of his old home. Many large maples are still the joy of the citizens who have always cared well for "the loveliest village of the plain".

At the new house Daniel had one room built for his own. It contained all the old furniture, the iron cooking vessels by the huge fireplace, the walnut table, the stand, the lounge, the cupboard with fancy designs in the doors - a good pattern for pie crust when one had time to mark the crusts as they should be. Two windows on the south let the sun cheer him on winter days, the open door on the west made the cool breeze on summer days





most welcome. On the table were his books, The Patriarchs of the Bible being his favorite next to the Bible. Beneath the windows, the lounge was well supplied with pillows and blankets, his woolen shawl always ready for him. The rocking chair, a stool, a few smaller chairs nearly filled the room, but when friends came there was always room "for one more". On the wall between the windows was a popular picture of that time, "The Stream of Life". On a river there was a rowboat, filled to capacity with a family of perhaps three or four generations - the most happy, placid faces, looking toward the shore they were nearing, the younger ones looking with some regret toward the shore they were leaving, and still keeping their hats on in case they could return. Still younger folks were happy just to be on the way - no hats to bother them, such a beautiful river, such lovely people, such a happy family.

The other and more attractive picture was a brightly colored map of Indiana. It seemed like a jewell box of gems, each one more beautiful than the other, each county a gem of another color. Indiana will always be the most beautiful state to the children who remember that room. The map was covered with a prtecting coat of varnish to save it from dust or perhaps from the unwelcome visits of flies with their extra toudhes of black.

A few years after the close of the war, several army surgeons were living in Auburn. They were Dr. D.J. Swartz, Dr. J.B. Casebeer, Dr. J.N. Chamberlain and Dr. J.A. Cowan. They were consulted by the family and it was believed that an operation might correct the condition in the showlder of the long suffering Daniel. But it was found to be too late.





There was no help for him - he must live on as he had learned to do until the Lord called him.

It was not his lot to recover his health, but he lived more than the years usually allotted to man. His days were spent in caring for his garden, trying to raise bees and honey. But his bees did not seem to care for a nervous man; they were not congenial friends, so it was not a success as a business. For a few years he was given the office of Justice of the Peace and was in the J.L. Davis block in the office of H.C. Peterson.

He had married Susanna, a splendid woman, who was kind and patient with his outbursts of rebellion over his lot, for there would come dark days when his patience would desert him. She had great understanding of his burden that it had been his duty to bear in some way. He would often turn to the old songs they used to sing, "Shall I be carried to the skies, while others sail through bloody seas?"

He told his devoted wife and daughters one Sunday morning in January, 1888, that he had a vision of a lovely place, but was not allowed to enter for he was told there was one more sacrifice he had to make. He did not tell them more about it. They asked him to rest while they prepared some food for him, so he fell asleep. When the daughters returned, they found he had been permitted to enter heaven.

The Methodist Church he had helped to establish in the early days could not hold all the people who came to show respect for one they had



known for many years and who was regarded to be one of the heroic pioneers. He was a man who did not accept defeat in life but was sustained by his faith in God.

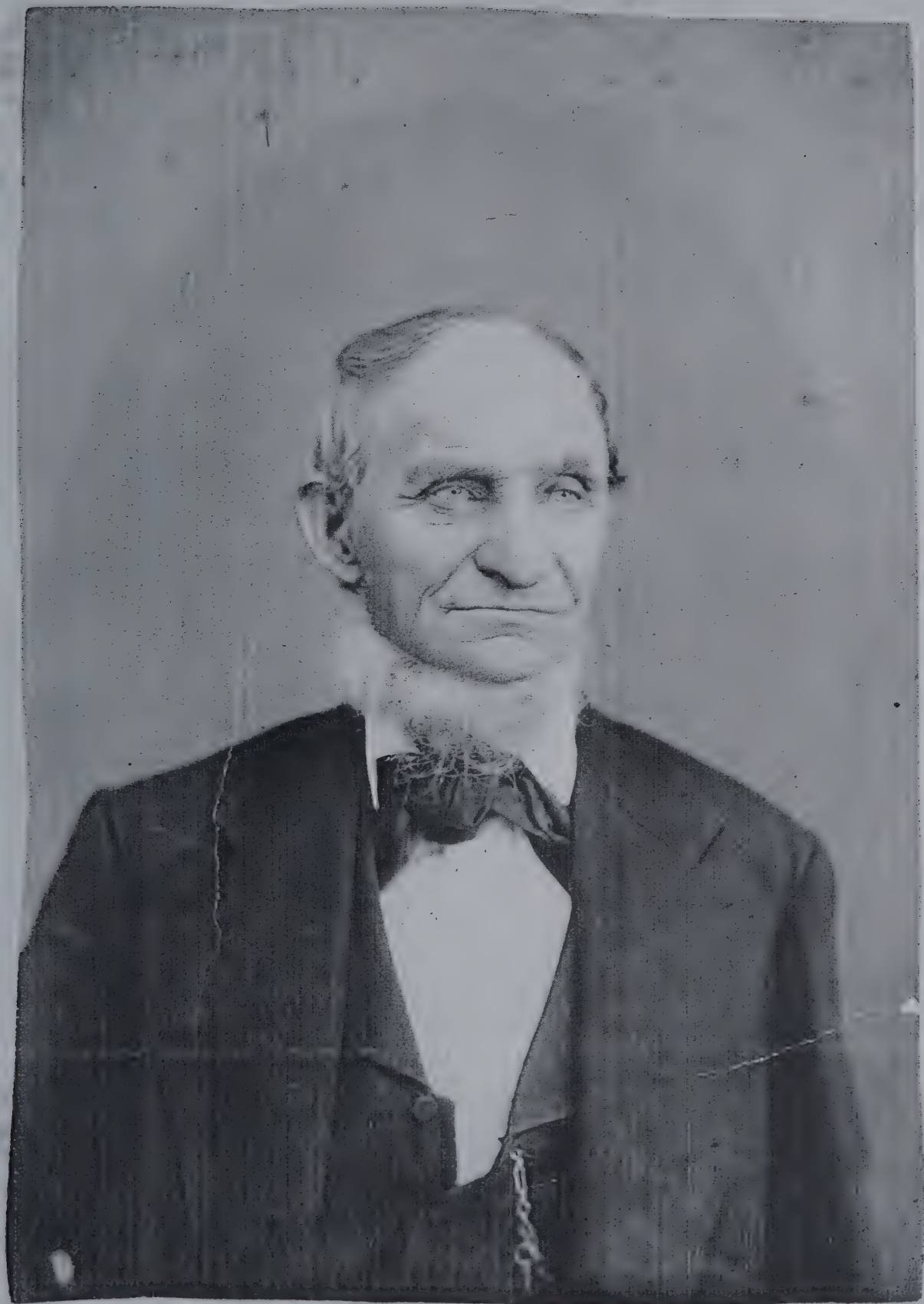
C.E.Z.

April 4, 1944

July 20, 1949









Frederick W. Allen

Born

1840-1891

Died

1918

a Class Leader about 1840-42.  
One of the first members of the 1st M. E. Church.





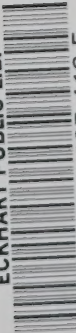




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